

San Joaquin Valley Rail Committee Minutes for March 9, 2006

Fresno, California (2006 Annual Meeting)

Item 1 - Call to Order and Announcements

Chair Bob Waterston called the meeting to order at 12:35 p.m. with friendly Fresno County welcoming remarks. Following group introductions, he noted how much the audience had grown since his appointment to the San Joaquin Valley Rail Committee (SJVRC) while retaining a focus on the same goals. He related that Fresno Mayor Alan Autry was “in-charge” of the San Joaquin Valley on Governor Schwarzenegger’s behalf.

Item 2 - Public Comments

Paul Dyson introduced himself as a 37-year veteran of the railroad industry and currently residing in southern California. After emigrating from Great Britain 25 years ago, he joined an organization that became the Rail Passenger Association of California.

His comments supported mobility for everybody and cost-effective solutions to this end. He observed changes in the railroad industry over the last 5-10 years when freight traffic has grown without a corresponding infrastructure expansion. These concerns led him to question how wise investments can be made to accommodate necessary punctual service.

Larry Miller asked Mr. Dyson to propose a solution when passenger trains run on rails Amtrak neither owns nor controls nationally. Mr. Dyson suggested that the public and private sectors collaborate to find a formula, which uses rights-of-way so both freight and passenger trains achieve satisfactory service. The railroad industry can make investments from the public as well as its own resources. Justification for brand new railroads should be considered, too, such as the route between Bakersfield and Los Angeles in Tehachapi Pass. He also cited demands for short-haul freight, commuter and intercity passenger rail lines in southern California (i.e., to Palm Springs).

Considering that the San Joaquin Valley Rail Committee agenda addresses relationships between capacity and service, Mr. Miller again enquired about ownership of these new rights-of-way. He commented that railroad corporations’ positive financial prospects provide for privately financed capital investments for the first time in 50 years. Mr. Dyson responded that enforceable contracts exist for improving private company infrastructure with public funding.

Dennis Manning asked about the Committee’s position on endorsing Growth Options for the 21st Century (Go 21). Chair Waterston replied that he met with Philip Denny of Go 21 following Mr. Denny’s January 12th presentation to the SJVRC. Although any additional details were unavailable at that time, Go 21 had been invited to address the SJVRC on May 11. Supervisor Bob Waterston added that he might have an opportunity to visit Washington, D.C. for further discussion.

Tom Bailey thanked Rick Depler of BNSF Railway, Bill Bronte and Lea Simpson of the California Department of Transportation for coming out to a recent public meeting on the Figarden improvement project in northern Fresno. Mr. Bailey acknowledged this need to open up dialog and allowing everyone to respond.

Item 3 - Action Items

A. *Minutes of the January 12, 2006 meeting in Bakersfield*

Bruce Heard offered a clarified statement he made at the last meeting. He had specifically “asked if Go 21 sought *effective freight* support from government bodies...” (4th page, 2nd paragraph – with added words in italics). The thirteen members present then unanimously approved the minutes and this correction.

B. *Election of Chair and Vice-Chair*

Larry Miller—Nominating Subcommittee Chair—reported that he polled the members via email for proposals of candidates to serve in these positions for the upcoming year. Vice-Chair Harvey Hall remained on the ballot for SJVRC Chair, Supervisor John Pedrozo for Vice-Chair. Ty Holscher made a motion to elect the named pair, which Dick Hauck seconded and other members agreed unanimously.

Chair Hall presented Supervisor Waterston a gavel on a plaque to recognize his year of service as the Chairman. Waterston rejoined with humorous anecdotes.

C. *Resolution on Fresno-Visalia-Bakersfield service*

Ty Holscher formally introduced his proposal to support “east-side” passenger rail service in the southern San Joaquin Valley and thanked Larry Miller for the draft resolution language. He considered this “first step” would start building a large coalition of entities to become a reality. A presentation to the Tulare County Association of Governments would go forward on April 17, 2006. The Council of Fresno County Governments board heard this proposition, too, and recommended that service between Fresno and Merced be considered using the Union Pacific (UP) Railroad as well.

Art Lloyd offered an opportunity for the SJVRC Technical Advisory Committee to conduct a more thorough revision of several concerns addressed through this resolution. They would come back to the full Committee in May with additional suggestions. Several points of discussion ensued, such as whether or not Union Pacific will even accept more passenger service. Dick Hauck pointed out that the priority should be passenger rail on a new alignment where freight is secondary.

Mr. Miller elaborated about how lack of service cripples and hinders San Joaquin Valley commerce and mobility. Although it stated no timeframe, the resolution conceded that people in these underserved areas need passenger rail in the future. He proffered that the same strategy of incremental improvements on the BNSF Railway could maybe work on the UP infrastructure and permit more trains to travel that route.

After hearing some additional remarks, Chair Hall then entertained a motion to refer this topic for consideration by the SJVRC Technical Advisory Committee, which passed.

D. Letter from Chair Waterston to BNSF Railway regarding on-time performance
This correspondence requested at the January 12th meeting had been included for information only, as the Chairman had signed after a draft was mailed to members for their preview.

E. SJVRC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) recommendations

Liz O'Donoghue of Amtrak followed-up the written staff report by recounting the TAC recommendations: 1) to meet with Congressman Bill Thomas, and 2) to lend support for proposed State infrastructure bonds that would include intercity rail projects. A June or November ballot measure was uncertain on March 9, 2006. However, Legislative members had still remained undecided at that time. She suggested that action might be imminent and an appropriate letter from the SJVRC Chair could be helpful.

Supervisor Alene Taylor made a motion to declare an "urgency" Agenda Item for the proposed correspondence, which was approved. Upon further discussion, a motion in support of contacting selected members of the Assembly from the Valley about an infrastructure bond passed unanimously.

A summary of Liz O'Donoghue's Amtrak and federal budget updates given at this time in the meeting can be found beneath Item 5 - Reports (F and G).

Lea Simpson then addressed the group about SJVRC "branding" and referred to a recently produced brochure developed to support the outreach of this Committee. The document describes what SJVRC members do to promote intercity rail in the Valley, and its design allows for individual customization of one brochure panel. Ms. Simpson also reiterated that Mayor Hall, as well as Supervisors Pedrozo and Waterston, could attend the next San Joaquin Valley Partnership meeting to raise SJVRC awareness among those stakeholders and find occasions for collaboration.

Item 4 - Guest Speaker

BNSF Railway Company

Rick Depler spoke to earlier comments implying that the only concern of private railroads was freight. He countered that BNSF does indeed care about passenger operations, as evidenced by actions taken by both D. J. Mitchell and himself in coming out to the SJVRC and other public meetings. By emphasizing working together as a partnership, BNSF has attained the best on-time performance for passengers in the country. For example, BNSF restored full service sooner than previously anticipated in February after the tie replacement between Fresno and Stockton. Mr. Depler noted a couple of challenges and solutions underway that support high-priority corridors like the San Joaquins. He offered a 30-45 minute presentation about deployment of a new safety technology at the next meeting.

Larry Miller expressed appreciation for work BNSF does in the community.

Item 5 - Reports

A. *New Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) train connection*

Stacey Mortensen announced this upcoming new service between Stockton and San Jose, which would connect with Trains 711/716 and replace their connecting Amtrak Thruway motorcoaches. Eric Schatmeier elaborated how this expansion offers ACE a fourth midday train during the week and possibly Saturdays as well. Construction on the 205 partly motivated this partnership, and service tentatively begins on July 1, 2006.

Michael Snyder asked about a proposed new Stockton station. Bill Bronte replied Mariposa Lakes, LLC—the developer—just completed the environmental review. This new location on Mariposa Road near the 99 should be under construction in 2007. As an unusual public-private partnership, the site gives an opportunity for *San Joaquins* to stop inside a new “town center” planned for southeast Stockton.

B. *Caltrans/Amtrak Marketing Report*

Mr. Schatmeier reported how February ridership rose dramatically over 2005 and gave details on the spring marketing campaign, which runs April 3 to May 8.

Carol Shannon of Amtrak announced a new website—espanol.amtrak.com—for Spanish-literate travelers. In addition, two upcoming promotions include Radio Disney’s Family Adventure that encourages riding with kids on the train. This program concludes with Disney characters catching the *San Joaquin* train from Fresno to Sacramento on May 6. An expanded partnership with the Applebee’s chain of restaurants will provide distribution of companion fare coupons to their diners throughout the San Joaquin and Pacific Surfliner Corridors.

C. *Amtrak California Corridor Report*

Larry Follis gave a brief update on ridership, revenue, and on-time performance, which improved. Dick Hauck requested an accounting of events surrounding the January 23rd overnight delay on Train 704. Mr. Follis and Cindy Camara from Amtrak, as well as Rick Depler, advised everyone on some combined factors leading up to this unusual delay. Several lessons were learned and proven useful.

D. - G. State and federal updates

Liz O'Donoghue, Bill Bronte, and Art Lloyd spent the previous few days in Washington, D.C. at American Public Transportation Association and States for Passenger Rail conferences. This time included appointments with members of the House Appropriations and Transportation & Infrastructure subcommittees. Continued support of Senate Bill 1516, which would provide resources for an 80% federal match on intercity passenger rail projects, as well as educating our Congressional delegation about the Amtrak California success story, were two messages this group had communicated throughout these meetings.

Although Art Lloyd found a receptive audience in D.C., the State of California's legislative affairs officer reminded Bill Bronte that the State's Representatives were largely unaware of Amtrak service in California. He encouraged talking to elected officials from SJVRC counties to raise awareness of additional funding needed for capital project improvements. The new SJVRC pamphlet should help facilitate members making such contacts.

Mr. Bronte also noted that the State's proposed intercity passenger rail operating budget remained at \$73 million for Fiscal Year 2006-07. The State Transportation Improvement Program included only \$31.7 million for capital projects, primarily to repay funds borrowed in earlier years. Capitalized maintenance and railroad dispatching were also cited as top issues. In response to a question from Bruce Heard, Liz O'Donoghue remarked how Amtrak's Acting CEO, David Hughes, came back to Washington "energized" by his trip to California and planned to showcase the State's partnership here.

Item 6 - Committee Member Concerns

Supervisor Alene Taylor reported the recent passing of Congressman Jim Costa's mother and provided the funeral information.

Adjournment

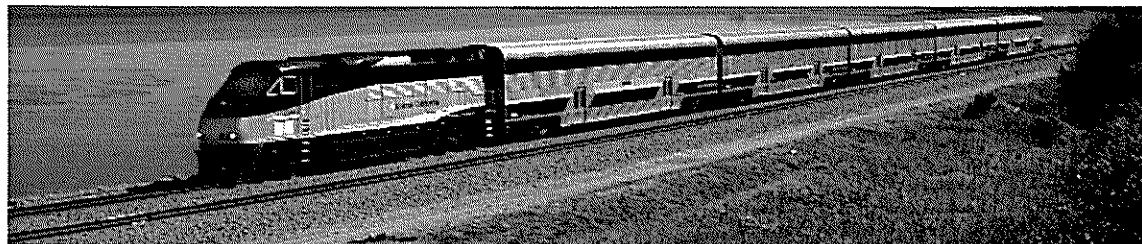
The meeting concluded at 2:50 p.m.



SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY RAIL COMMITTEE
ROLL CALL FOR
March 9, 2006
Fresno, Calif.

MEMBER NAME	REPRESENTING	HERE
BART Director TOM BLALOCK	ALAMEDA	
MICHAEL SNYDER	ALAMEDA	ü
Supvr. MARY PIEPHO	CONTRA COSTA	
HOWARD ABELSON	CONTRA COSTA	ü
Supvr. JOHN GIOIA (alt)	CONTRA COSTA	
Supvr. BOB WATERSTON (Past-Chair)	FRESNO	ü
LARRY MILLER	FRESNO	ü
Supvr. MICHAEL RUBIO	KERN	
Mayor HARVEY HALL (Chair)	KERN	ü
Supvr. DON MABEN (alt)	KERN	
Supvr. ALENE TAYLOR	KINGS	ü
RICHARD HAUCK	KINGS	ü
SAM ABDELHADI (alt for Supvr. Mike Antonovich)	LOS ANGELES	ü
BRUCE HEARD	LOS ANGELES	ü
Supvr. MAX RODRIGUEZ	MADERA	
SARAH ROSS	MADERA	ü
Supvr. JOHN PEDROZO (Vice-Chair)	MERCED	ü
ANGELO LAMAS	MERCED	ü
Supvr. KATHLEEN CROOKHAM (alt)	MERCED	
Supvr. ILLA COLLIN	SACRAMENTO	
CAMERON BEACH	SACRAMENTO	ü
Supvr. LEROY ORNELLAS	SAN JOAQUIN	
STACEY MORTENSEN	SAN JOAQUIN	ü
Supvr. JIM DEMARTINI	STANISLAUS	
GEORGE GAEKLE	STANISLAUS	
Supvr. WILLIAM O'BRIEN (alt)	STANISLAUS	
Supvr. CONNIE CONWAY	TULARE	
TY HOLSCHER	TULARE	ü
ART LLOYD	FACILITATOR	ü

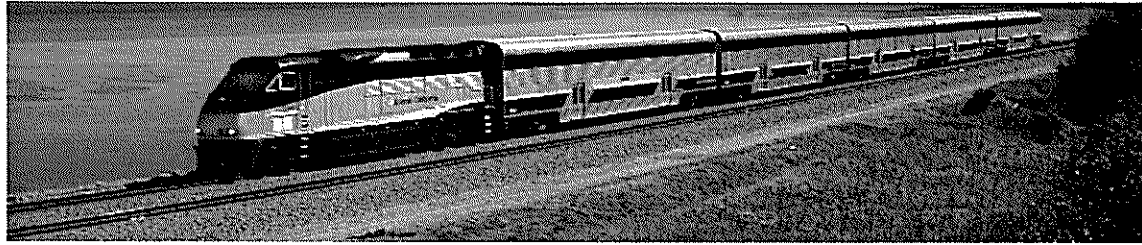
Total voting members present: **15**



SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY RAIL COMMITTEE
MARCH 10, 2006
FRESNO, CA

NAME	REPRESENTING	E-MAIL* ~	PHONE #*
LARRY MILLER	FRESNO		
PAUL DYSON	Rail PAC		
Carol Shannon	Amtrak		
Tom SPONSER	AMTRAK		
RICK DEPLER	BNSF Rwy		
Michael Snyder	Alameda County		
Kenny Mostern	TRAC TRAC		
TY HOLSCHER	TULARE CO.		
RICH ORTEGA	CITY OF TULARE		
Lea Simpson	CALTRANS		
STACEY MORTENSEN	SJRRC		
Sarah Koss	MCTC		
ARTHUR LLOYD	SJRRC		

* NOTE THESE ITEMS MAY BE RELEASED. IF YOU DO NOT WANT I



SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY RAIL COMMITTEE
MARCH 10, 2006
FRESNO, CA

NAME	REPRESENTING	E-MAIL*	PHONE #*
Tim Newhoff	T. I. E		
BRUCE JENKINS	RAILPAC		
Tom BAILEY	F.A.R.R.C.		
Russ Jackson	RAILPAC		
ROBERT RAMSAY	FRESNO		
David Tyckoson	TRAC		
Dorcas M. Breigge	Station Host Assoc of Calif.		
ANGELO LAMAS	MERCED CO		
JOHN PEDROLO	MERCED CO		
Mothy Crosby	Fresno		
T. Suntrapak	Kings Co.		

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